

SC PROJECT LEARNING TREE

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



 PROJECT
LEARNING
TREE
SOUTH CAROLINA

PLT is an initiative of SFI Inc.



COORDINATOR'S CORNER

2020 was a year of tremendous challenge and change for the South Carolina and national PLT programs. Some of the challenges ended up being blessings in disguise that helped the program develop new, purposeful and innovative ways to meet them. Other challenges extended past the COVID-19 pandemic and are being met to ensure the continued viability of the PLT program.



Matt Schnabel, SC PLT Coordinator

There were many changes this year, and there will continue to be in 2021. As educational resources, professional development trends and technology have evolved, the PLT program must also continue to evolve. It must change to continue to be a relevant and useful tool to help educators teach our youth about the importance of fact-based environmental science and the conservation of our shared natural resources.

The national PLT program and our national sponsor, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), adopted new business and education models in 2020 and met with all state program coordinators to explain the reasoning for the changes. Here are the key components:

1. How is PLT changing its education model? *PLT is adopting a new education model that makes it much easier for educators to access PLT guides and resources. This model brings us into alignment with how society—and especially educators—seek out information: by downloading or buying resources online. In concert, PLT will continue to promote and direct educators to our state partners and State Coordinators to*

connect to state-specific resources and opportunities, including professional development (PD). This model is founded on successful prevailing models within the field of environmental education that make materials available for little or no cost, and offer PD as a value-added experience

(e.g., the GLOBE Program, National Geographic, BEETLES). This model is also proven in other fields.

2. Why change the model? *This model addresses four essential challenges faced by PLT at the national and state levels. Continuing with PLT's current*



model is not a feasible alternative for solving these challenges. Challenges include becoming more accessible in a crowded field (digital on demand), reversing a steady decline in PD participation (53% decrease in past 10 years), achieving financial sustainability, and ensuring and growing state program success.

3. How will national PLT and SFI continue to support state programs? *PLT will continue to create award-winning curriculum and educational resources, expand expertise and resources (i.e., training, handbooks, toolkits, agendas, etc.) in high quality PD, provide national level communications and marketing (plus state level guidance), introduce a Facilitator Development Initiative to support states in recruiting, developing, and retaining high quality and engaged workshop facilitators, offer network grants in support of PD development and delivery, capacity building, and critical priorities, and finally serve as a central convener of the network's community of practice through our annual conference, workshops, webinars, the listserv, social media, and related communications.*

There will be some growing pains for the SC PLT program, but I feel blessed that we have such great support from the SC

Department of Education, the SC Forestry Commission and the Forestry Association of SC as well as financial support from contributions and grants through national PLT, our state SFI implementation committee and many other local donors. The decision by national PLT/SFI to not require PD to obtain a PLT guide will not affect how we run our state program. To obtain a guide through a state PD event, participants will need to complete the PD. SCPLT will also still offer FREE PD and guides to students at SC colleges and universities and in-service teachers at schools and school districts who request a PD event for their staff.

Our active facilitators are the backbone of the program and are the key to its success. Nineteen facilitators rose above the hurdles that COVID-19 created to lead 35 separate workshops across the state to train 569 new PLT educators! Many thanks to all the PLT Facilitators that led workshops this year! Started in 2019, SC PLT implemented its "Facilitator Rewards Program" as a way to thank active facilitators for their hard work

and to further facilitator learning about the PLT program. Facilitators earn points by facilitating PD events, helping at conferences, coordinating SCPLT EE Centers or leading "teaser" presentations. Rewards range from gift certificates to an all-expense paid trip to the national PLT Coordinators' Conference. This year the facilitators that were the most active were Sara Beth Freytag, Carrie Whitlock and Kimberly Fickling. Thanks goes to all our facilitators for their dedication to the SC PLT program!

Because of the forestry community's sustained and enthusiastic support of the SC PLT program, we have continued to grow our network of conservation educators who are better equipped to teach children about the connection between the environmental, social and economic benefits of sustainable forest management and natural resource conservation. Thank you to all of you who have supported SC PLT with your time, money and skills and I ask for your continued support...WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!!!

ASSISTANT COORDINATOR'S CORNER

This certainly has been an unprecedented year for South Carolina Project Learning Tree. With social distancing guidelines, advisement against group gatherings and mask ordinances, it was not feasible for our program to host our typical in-person PD events (formally known as workshops). Fortunately, we were able to adapt our trainings to take place virtually and continue to reach educators across the state. The virtual format consists of a 1.5-

hour live video conference in which participants get acquainted with our state program, learn about helpful online resources and participate in two PLT activities. They then get access to an electronic copy of the activity guide and the online PD training for the selected module, which is completed individually. Although this format isn't as effective as an in-person training, which gives educators hands-on experience with the activities, it does have some benefits. Offering PD



Beth Foley, SC Assistant PLT Coordinator

events in a virtual format has allowed us to reach a broader audience across the whole state instead of just the local community located near a workshop host site.

We received funding through an ee360 grant to offer virtual trainings, free of charge, at our SC PLT Environmental Education Centers, as well as for in-service and pre-service educators. The ee360 grant is a five-year initiative that supports environmental education leaders to help increase environmental literacy. The North American Association for Environmental Education leads the initiative through a cooperative agreement with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and seven partner organizations. This funding was a huge contributor to our outreach success this year. It covered the costs of access codes (online PD and electronic guides) for 25 virtual PD events, including six open-to-the-public trainings at our SC PLT EE Centers, and allowed us to reach 359 participants during the six-month grant period. This was year four of the five-year agreement, so I plan to apply for this funding again next year.

National PLT has been very busy with revising old activity guides and developing new curriculum offerings. This year, they released themed collections of activities geared towards specific grade level bands. The three collections are: “Sensational Trees – Grades K-2,” “Biodiversity Blitz – Grades 3-5” and “Discover Your Urban Forest – Grades 6-8.” These activities feature content from the new “Explore Your Environment: K-8 Activity Guide.” The newly revised K-8 activity guide has been in the works for the last several years and will be published in the spring of 2021. It will have a fresh new look



and format. A number of the similar activities have been combined into one and some of the less popular activities have been taken out, so it will now have 50 hands-on activities. The guide is correlated to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the lessons are designed around the 5E instructional model. This is great timing because our new state academic science standards are also aligned to NGSS. It will also have some helpful call out boxes focused on

STEM strategies, getting kids moving and active, and career connections. Finally, PLT recently rolled out the new “Pocket Guide: Seeds to Trees” which is geared towards ages 3-6. Designed to slip into your pocket or backpack, this guide offers some of the most popular early childhood activities, repurposed and redesigned into a 4-by-6-inch paperback. We’re extremely thankful to International Paper for helping to fund the development of this resource.

How do you spell success?

- 22,646 SC educators trained in 1,091 workshops since 1980.
- Developed new synchronous and asynchronous virtual professional development resources in quick response to in-person events being canceled due to the COVID-19 outbreak.



About SC Project Learning Tree

Project Learning Tree is the environmental education program of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and sponsored in South Carolina by the S.C. Forestry Commission, the State Department of Education, and the S.C. Forestry Foundation [a 509 (a) (3) non-profit organization].



One of the best workshops I've been to. Especially helpful for informal educators with no real science background. The hands-on approach was very helpful!



Great workshop! I am excited to apply the knowledge I have learned to educate youth in my area. I also look forward to expanding my knowledge and growth through continued PLT instructions.



This course was very informative. I never knew how much you could learn while being outside. I will try to use this material with my own children so that they can appreciate the outdoors. Well done!

2020 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT

In 2020, 35 face-to-face and virtual professional development (PD) events were conducted with 569 participants. With one PD event covering more than one module, a total of 569 copies of the PLT modules were distributed at these PD events. The following is a breakdown of the types of PD events:

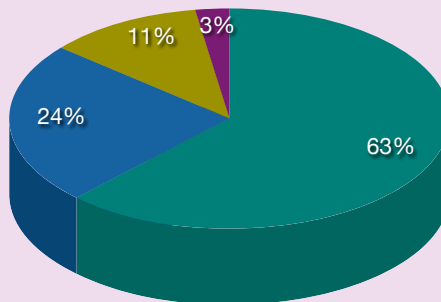
Type Of Workshop	# Of PD events*	% Of PD events	# Of Participants	% Of Total Participants
Early Childhood	5	14	108	18
Pre-service Early Childhood	3	8	51	9
PreK-8	6	17	88	15
Pre-service PreK-8	16	44	228	39
National PLT Online	N/A	N/A	21	4
E-Unit Tremendous Science (K-2)	2	6	34	6
E-Unit Energy in Ecosystems (3-5)	3	8	37	6
Secondary Forests of the World	1	3	23	4
TOTALS:	36	N/A	590	N/A

* In order to show how many of each PLT module was distributed and how many PD events were conducted for each module, PD events that covered more than one module are shown as separate workshops for each module, making the total number of PD events 36.

2020 SC PLT BUDGET SUMMARY

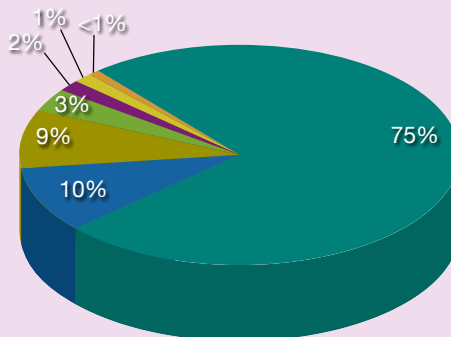
Income: \$39,803.57

Cash Balance	\$24,808.89
Grants	\$9,500.00
Corporate Donations	\$4,500.00
Workshop Fees	\$994.68
TOTAL	\$39,803.57



Expenses: \$12,748.34

Grant Expenditures	\$9,500.00
Awards and Certificates	\$1,255.60
Travel	\$1,103.80
Operating Expenses	\$411.50
Activity Guides	\$212.50
Workshop Expenses	\$165.57
Publicity	\$99.37
TOTAL	\$12,748.34



In-Kind Contributions: \$12,932.98

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS

SC SFI State Implementation Committee
Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Inc.

SC Tree Farm Committee
International Paper

2020 WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

Beth Foley	Lynn Pilescki
Carrie Whitlock	Matt Schnabel
Cassie Bell	Russell Hubright
Cynthia Deaton	Sara Beth Freytag
Ingrid Norris	Stephanie Moore
Jennifer Majors	Susan Fernandez
Jes Swanson	Taylor Rowe
Kelly Costner	Terrell Peace
Kelly Murphy	Thea Hagan
Kimberly Fickling	Tia Prostko
Lynn Hoekstra	

2020 Facilitators Who Volunteered in Other Ways

Emily Oakman	Michelle Evans
Darene Weatherlow	Renee Chewning
Kelli Meeker	Robert Carter

PLT STEERING COMMITTEE

Executive Officers

- Victoria Pasco, Chair
Richland School District 2
- Sarah Talley, Vice Chair
U.S. Forest Service
- Rosemary Wicker, Secretary
University of South Carolina
- Emily Oakman, Treasurer
Forestry Association of SC
- Matt Schnabel, Coordinator
SC Forestry Commission

Members

- Barbara Allen
Santee Cooper (retired)
- Chanda Cooper
Richland County Conservation District
- Cynthia Deaton
Clemson University
- Beth Foley
SC Forestry Commission
- Russell Hubright
SC Forestry Commission
- William Keels
Clemson University
- Gwendolyn Shealy
SC Department of Education
- Linda Sinclair
SCDE Science Consultant (retired)
- Tanya Towne
Laurens County School District 55
- Amy Umberger
Lexington/Richland District Five
- Michael Walker
International Paper

Dr. Jessica Daniel Named Outstanding Educator of the Year

Dr. Jessica Daniel of Sumter has been named the 2020 South Carolina Project Learning Tree Jerry L. Shrum Outstanding Educator of the Year. She was selected by the South Carolina PLT Steering Committee in early June.

Also the 2019 South Carolina Project Learning Tree Facilitator of the Year, Daniel has been an instructor in Central Carolina Technical College's Natural Resources Management program since 2016, where she has included PLT curriculum delivery and training in many of her courses, primarily as a mechanism to help students understand difficult natural resources management concepts.

In 2018, she became certified as a PLT, Project WET and Project WILD facilitator, and since then, she has provided PLT certification trainings to area elementary and middle school teachers. Daniel has offered to extend PLT trainings to more local teachers and encouraged teachers to use PLT materials and resources in creative ways in their classrooms.

In other trainings and events held with fellow faculty at CCTC, she has used PLT as an example of creative ways to



integrate environmental education and hands-on learning into courses. Daniel also uses several other PLT lessons as foundations for class activities, building on them and tying them into other material as appropriate for college-level courses. All the Natural Resources Management students at CCTC complete a PLT training during their second year in the program.

She loves sharing her passion and knowledge for environmental conservation and stewardship with her students, as well as providing the support necessary so they can succeed in their chosen professions. A mother of one, Daniel moved to Auburn, Ala., in August to take a position with Auburn University's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences.

SCPLT Facilitator Refresher Training Held Virtually

The scheduled in-person facilitator refresher at Beehive Tree Farm in Adam's Run had to be changed to a virtual event because of the COVID-19 outbreak. However, we had a great group of PLT facilitators who participated in the virtual refresher and we still were able to have our usual fun. The virtual refresher was a blessing in disguise because the time needed to participate was reduced and travel was eliminated. This allowed more people to participate and get to know each other inside our facilitator network.

Facilitators received updates about the national and state PLT programs, learned how to lead a virtual workshop, participated in a K-2 Tremendous Science! E-unit PD event, and received

the electronic guide at no cost thanks to ee360 grant funding. We hope to resume our in-person facilitator refreshers in 2021 and see you all there!

Participants: Anna Makiewicz, Cassie Bell, Chanda Cooper, Cynthia Spratley, Darene Weatherlow, Dodie Clark, Ingrid Norris, Jennifer Majors, John Ratterree, Kelly Costner, Linda Doherty, Linda Sinclair, Lynn Hoekstra, Mary Beth Gosnell, Michelle Evans, Samantha Janicki, Sara Beth Freytag, Sarah Talley.



